

SHELLEY

AUGUST 4, 1792 — JULY 8, 1822



From
"POETRY AND MUSIC SONGS"
Seeking a Publisher

*I have heard the systems swinging
Sing the echoes of the spheres,
I have heard the ages winging
Ring the choruses of years
And these broken hearted mortals in the tragedy of tears.*

*But the great and tragic measures
Of the strife and passions sore
Are forgotten in the pleasures
Of the strains that on me pour,
In the panting panting rapture of his lyric lyric lore.*

BY

ack to **DAVID CHALMERS NIMMO**

Author of

"Nature Songs," "Home Songs," "Soul Songs," "Soldier
Songs," "Songs and Tales," etc.

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PARAGRAPH FROM PREFACE TO "NATURE SONGS"

A great deal more in this book than the mere poetic forms will instantly compel comparisons with the poet Shelley. It is the right place to acknowledge the relationship which is none other than that of poetic fatherhood. When attending McMaster University in Toronto my first real interest was aroused in lyrical verse by our studies in Palgrave's "Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics." In this book I was especially attracted to Shelley and read, out of class, all the shorter and most of his longer productions. My delight was so great that one one occasion I skipped the mathematical lectures and memorized the "Adonais." This was no doubt a grave university sin but I have ever considered it, apart from nature's endowment, as one of the best inspirations of the spirit of poetry in me. With the poems continually singing themselves in my ears and the visions flashing across my eyes it is but natural that both the inner spirit and the outer form should take something from the soul that nursed them into being and in some measure gave them their ideal. In view of this I have sometimes thought to write a song of appreciation as I have done for some other persons in "Civic Songs," but there are so many conscious and unconscious evidences of my obligation that it seems hardly necessary.

SHELLEY

Celestial Muse! Nurse of immortal song!
High hierarchic Spirit famed and bright!
Great Motherhood who standest in life's throng,
A solar Soul amid our mortal night!
Thou sunlike Giver of pure passions white,
Of worlds of thought from life's profoundest deep,
Of images that strike the spirit sight,
Of cosmic rythmic music full in sweep,
Of beautifuls of infinite delight
And angel speech through which all virtues leap
Into immortal song the ages love and keep!

Now let me pay a debt of gratitude
Ere power declines or ere I shall go hence.
Night cometh soon. Youth never is renewed
And death's eternal silences so dense
Oft final falls and slays our high intents.
Ere falls the stroke, now let me pay the debt
And tribute bring and offer soul incense,
Though richest flowers the spirit ever met
Should be my gifts of grateful reverence
For him on whom thy mother heart was set,
The youngest, best beloved, the sweetest, dearest yet.

He first it was who woke the poet spirit
And quickened soul to feel and hear and see.
His strain of song when first I paused to hear it
Was like the call of thy maternity:
"Come back, my own, come back to mine and me!"
I heard. I thrilled. I fed upon the sound.
Youth drank it in. Soul felt the soul in thee.
A new delight, the purest life had found
Had opened up with fountains flowing free.
When first I heard amazed I staggered round,
The new born love and joy so in delirium bound.

I am seeking a publisher for both poetry and prose who will even look at the product and accept or reject according as it is or is not a real contribution to American song and life. D. C. N.

And often in those bright poetic days
When I had time and friendship for great books
He was the chiefest singer of those lays
That did enthrall to quiet hours and nooks.
Oft in his song I saw thy very looks
Celestial Muse, and such a light divine
Was on thy countenance as on the brooks
When springtime suns upon them sudden shine.
His pulsing song that with contagion hooks
Youth's beauty, passion, music senses fine
Did find the heir of song and fed him bread and wine.

And when by merest accident I found
I too could write a line of lilted pace
Delirious hope did into being bound
And pride paternal did the birth embrace.
The new born heir with bright prophetic face
I brought to him to be imbued and taught
In that great lore few few of all the race
Can ever teach though even ardent sought.
Ideal was he; his song was rich in grace;
His fire was life; his inspirations wrought
And soaring singing hope was into heaven caught.

In after days in my sore trouble life,
When blind and lost and staggering through the night,
When near insane, drunk with the wine of strife,
And all was gone, hope, strength and faith and right,
When travailing through the wilderness of blight-
Ing unbelief and threatening death before,
His was the strain, passion and beauty bright
Old Nature in her kindness to me bore
And to my heart the anodyne bound tight.
It was a balsam, Gilead balm of yore;
It calmed my weeping heart and soothed and taught me lore.

Perhaps 'tis but the memory of my youth,
Perhaps 'tis but his service in dark days,
Perhaps 'tis but his music on my ruth,
Perhaps 'tis but his echoing strain that stays
Within the soul and sings along life's ways,
Perhaps 'tis but the saturated sense

The years have fed that spirit now betrays,
But still I turn as in my youth intense
To hear, to see, to think, to feel the lays
That still have power though age might turn me thence;
The song is pleasure still, the beauty leads me hence.

Then thou, great Mother of all living song,
Presiding Genius in all genius fine,
Renewing Life, creating Virtue strong,
Now let me pour into a grateful line
My own and other gratitude like mine!
We've drank the life of his soul's overflow,
He's been to us, light, love and fire and wine,
His song revives our embers to a glow
And leads us up to hear the choir divine.
One of the few, through him thou dost bestow
Life, beauty, dream and song as binds us evermo.

And he was one of those choice chosen few.
To him thy youngest, best beloved and last,
The fulness that thy being doth endue
Was opened up, was full and free unclasped
And more than soul could hold into him passed.
An earthly form immortal riches filled,
Thy gifts divine so free within him massed
The numbers, fineness, fulness fairly spilled
Beyond the power that girdles safe and fast.
A dreamer scarce could dream when passion thrilled
Such priceless priceless gifts for earth so famine tilled!

Oh such a full and overflowing soul!
A plentitude and plethora of life,
A fragment of the great eternal whole
So full and fed it was with self at strife
And all 'gainst it was armed as with a knife,
His being was dynamic, pulsing red,
All spiritual vitalities so rife
They nigh consumed the mortal frame they fed
As fire consumes the flesh that soul must wife.
He was a reservoir, unexhausted head
That vital overflowed and round contagion spread.

His life and song and critical defects
Sprang from a rich and prodigal excess,
Containless overflow that far projects
The spirit past its goal, a boundlessness
Of being rich in passion, thought and dress
Far, far beyond his own right or control.
'Twas like the powers that nature doth repress,
When once released they shoot or plunge or roll
Like fierce volcanic fires, the blinding stress
Of lightning storms or outraged ocean's soul;
They sweep beyond the ends the wise and virtuous pole.

So was he full as from supernal fountains
That never knew or felt or dreamed decline.
So was he fed as if from heaven's mountains
Pure silver streams with health and virtue fine.
Oh what a sweep, momentum, drive divine
We feel in him, a movement and a flood
As ocean vast did suddenly resign
A gulf-stream tide into some sluggish mud;
Or such a flow or rush of vital wine
As nature young lets in each bursting bud
When springtime sudden wakes with crimson crimson blood.

When he doth write or give himself to song
It seems as if the great eternal urge
Is struggling with a fulness overstrong
And seeking vent, for ocean's boundless surge
Is felt behind the paeon or the dirge.
His heart and brain are full of flame and glow
And forces out the matter with a splurge
As if there were no artist soul below
But only nature void of power to purge.
He's life pulsating, white electric "go,"
A passion unconsumed, a spirit overflow.

There is a rush of swift impetuosity
That strikes the sense and fills the soul with speed,
Just as the larger life and keen velocity
The lesser lifts and bears it in the lead.
The slumb'ring soul is quickened, and the breed
Of the immortal kind within us found.

The mind takes fire, the imagination freed,
And underneath the passion new unbound
The thinker thinks, new beauty doth him feed,
The eternal music breaks with glorious sound
And in the rhythmic life we're swept along and round.

So it was his to really sing a song
For with the fulness was a rhythmic swing,
An elemental music in the brain
Akin to that that doth forever sing
In worlds, men, gods, birds, beast, insect and thing.
A cosmic and dynamic swell and beat
Did penetrate the fulness. There's a ring
In all his songs, a nature echoing sweet,
A music pure on which our life would swing,
A central singing bearing far and fleet,
That feeds the larger soul and gives her wings for feet.

The lyric life of the warm universe
Was gathered up and concentrated here.
By some strange mystery of the strife and curse
The lyric soul had found an organ dear
And startled Life with raptured measures clear.
Whoever hears is hungry still for more;
It healeth sorrow, strife and pain and fear;
It teaches man to wonder and adore,
And sights the soul unto the ideal sphere.
What vital strains! What pulsing, pulsing score!
What panting panting rapture! What lyric lyric lore!

A nature priest, a singer unsurpassed
He singeth forth the music nature holds,
The measures old creation's hour had cast
In musical and vibratory moulds.
In earth and skies, seas, mountains, fields and wolds
Is swing and swell, ride, tide and sway and sweep
That pierces soul in spite of sense that folds.
His piercing, pulsing, panting measures leap
Contagious and the spirit high embolds.
Bright, quick and swift we spring out of the deep,
Reach hungry out to hear and mount glad up the steep.

The fountain spontaneity of song
The intensity, the beauty and the strain,
The impetus, the lift that sweeps along,
Clean captivates the senses, heart and brain,
All finished fine as wild it seems insane.
Of all the bands, the artists and the lyres
He is supreme in what must long remain
The vital life in all poetic fires;
The lyric and the lyrical retain
The primal, ever recreating ires
That nature ever breathes and in her singers sires.

He was the chief musician of the choir;
A violin among the sons of song;
A master artist on life's favorite lyre
And for no ends of either right or wrong,
Nor for the few, nor for the shouting throng.
A pure musician with a gift supreme
He sang to ease his surging passions strong,
To feed desire, to nurse his world of dream,
To help him snatch some strains that must belong
To paeans, lyrics, requiems that stream
From love's eternal world to our discordant scheme.

He is the proof, the law and lay supreme
That poetry must always always sing,
That like the fountain, flower and bird and dream
Out of the heart of nature it must wing
With singing in its every inner spring.
The elemental measures of old earth,
The vibratory movements in each thing,
The rhythms through the universal girth
Rhymes all within and gives life marching swing.
And poetry redeeming from the dearth
Must always have an elemental ring,
A metrical and soul melodious mirth;
The nature of the worlds is musical by birth.

The inner essence of this universe
Not only in its spirits but its things
Is musical, and even in the curse
There is a soul that always always sings.

The eternal power and life forever swings
Upon its way with true majestic stride
And lyrical or tragic music flings
As change or fate but lift or crush her pride.
And poetry that ever faithful clings
To human life however sore or tried
Translates the joy or sorrow as it springs,
And finds a law to singing old allied,
Great thought in music clad has beauty for his bride.

Thou spirit of the beautiful! Divine
And radiant emanation of the dream!
Thrice fair, supercelestial soul benign
Bursting thy way through this material scheme
As rainbows burst and shine and glow and gleam!
Prenatal him in thy soul thou didst merse
And thine own life was mingled in his stream
And naught else could he see. The very curse
With virtues bloomed as beauty did redeem.
Thy soul so fair didst so in him unpurse
A temple unto thee grew this great universe.

Oh the beautiful, the beautiful,
That something like the ideal on our sight,
That grace unseen yet uneclipsable,
Approaches to perfection's sacred height!
That inner spirit, glory, effluence bright
That ever streams from all created things,
Though only form and clad in robes of light
Not only shines but also breathes and sings,
The beautiful, the beautiful bedight
In her own soul and rainbow gleaming wings,
He saw the outward form, its life and inner springs.

He saw it on the earth and circling heaven,
On mountain, forest, field and hill and stream,
In sun and moon and stars and storms and levin,
In clouds and beast, in birds and flowers supreme,
And in the brief ephemeramorphs that teem.
The bursting dawn so infinitely bright
And clad in sanguine robes that glow and gleam,

The golden noon majestic in his height
And azure robed as only poets dream,
The solemn, calm and starry mantled night
More beautiful than all the artists theme,
Great Nature's pure prime ministers of might,
He saw them burst and shine and grow upon his sight.

He saw it on and in this wide humanity
A light divine above the world so grim,
A purer soul that sense insanity
Cannot destroy, but only veil and dim
As clouds around the morning spirits swim.
And as the storm is oft asunder rent
And splendor flames sheer up the eastern rim
So beauty burst out of this fleshly tent
That well might clothe archangel seraphim.
Immortal souls, wise, pure, omnipotent
In virtue, truth and love were to his vision lent.

He saw it more in those ideals bright
That sprang to life within his glowing mind,
Visions and dreams and thought-souls robed in light,
So glorious, of such exalted kind
The dreamers oft are stricken as if blind.
New worlds of man, land, seas and bird and flower,
Truth, virtue, honor, love and life rewined
He saw with rich imagination's power
And saw all lifted, gloried and divined,
An ideal world, supreme ideal endower,
And still the glory flames around this ruined bower.

But most of all, Oh most of all he saw
That beauty fair far far in deeps unknown,
An awful presence that had power to draw
All artist souls and there before her throne
Bow genius down in silence and alone.
It was a spirit most supremely bright
But softened down, the merest portion shown,
To meet the state of shadow-darkened sight
But yet the little glimpses on us thrown
Doth solemnize, doth lift and cleanse and light
And prophecies a dawn beyond our gathering night.

Oh that eternal beauty life divine
That penetrates and rounds the universe,
So like an inner being fair and fine
And unclipsed by all usurping curse!
And though a tempest darkness may immerse
It bursts and flames and fills the earth and skies
So beautiful it doth immortals nurse
And young or old all unto it arise.
A pure high priest with an enchanter's verse
He purges night from off our blinded eyes
Until we look and sigh with deep divine surprise.

And much much more, Oh Muse, we could recite
Of his great gifts, his services and fame
For he was rich beyond our mortal sight
And his brief day burned like a glowing flame.
He served the race and lifted up its aim
To new ideals. He flung into the strife
A lyric soul that at the last became
A genius pure inspiring nobler life.
The Truth could tell and gather round his name
A dozen counts for honors rich and rife,
Could hold them up on high and dare the lightning knife.

But why repeat his uncontested claims?
Pure dreamer, lover, singer of great dreams;
Idealist with new prophetic aims;
A socialist against our social schemes
And moralist with doctrine life redeems.
He was a prime defender of old song;
A eulogist with rainbow flowing streams;
A philanthropist that double hated wrong
And prophet priest on whom the future gleams.
But leave the claims. Let soul be borne along
To sight the vision new and hear new measures throng!

Off on the slopes of immortality
In mansion vast the banquet feast is spread,
And geniuses in honor and courtality,
Thy sons and daughters with glory on each head
Come into view by royal music led.
And there dost thou Enchantress Prime preside

As thy great guests are by each other fed.
And close to thee upon each honored side
Is one so great the world was to him wed
And on thy left a younger is descried
And he is all thy power and he is all thy pride.

The banquet o'er, sisters and brothers great
Draw back but still desire another feast.
Oh who could such behold and contemplate
All poets of all times, princess and priest
And not feel soul's expansion vast increased!
One here recites and there on paints, and then
Thy mother pride like sunrise in the east
Doth turn on him thy complacential ken.
While that applause is unto him released
Thou dost request a royal song as when
Great charmers of delight a magic tale unpen.

Then with a more than siren charmer's charm
And with a power on Shakespeare and the rest,
With eyes on fire and gesture in each arm
And mounting pride in his own mother's breast
He sang a song for each supplying guest.
The admiration, honor and delight
That Queen of song in every soul possessed
He gathered up and did anew bedight
In his own soul of crimson passion blest.
With burden vast and inspiration white
He flung a lyric song on soul and sense and sight.

"Poetic Muse! Great Spirit of all song!
Divinest Queen immortal singers own!
Magnetic Soul of this encircling throng
Who sing to thee and sing to thee alone!
Great Sister of the Wisdom all enthroned!
Twin Spirit unto Virtue pure and fair!
The bosom Friend, Companion closest known
To Honor, Truth, Faith, Justice, Love and Prayer!
But best of all, the best we can intone,
Great Motherhood! for thou with us didst share
The essence of thy life, thy gifts so rich and rare."

"And thou hast been to us the life of life,
These inborn gifts was they delight to nurse.
There never was a maiden mother rife
With more high dream and singing joyous verse
Then round our cradles thou didst free unpurse.
Life's early memories link themselves with thee.
Ere there was dawn and darkness did immerse
The first sweet sounds that found each infant me
Was from thy heart enchanting off the curse.
The first fond sight that memory can free
Is thy bright countenance, thine eyes like sun and sea."

"Oft, often, oft when looking on the past
Rich mem'ry brings a more than royal feast,
A mother young with boundless treasures clasped
Turning her young to front the dawning east
To reverence all being's golden priest.
Sweet choicest lines of pure immortal song,
A snatch of music nature has released,
Some wisdom pure, great truths of right and wrong,
And beauty gleams on flower and bird and beast,
Was fed to opening soul and passion strong,
Preserving from the blight that blunts and blinds the throng."

"As up we grew what vigilance and care!
What sacrifice and pure example prime!
What meditation and devoutest prayer
O'er this strange birth that for a little time
Is poised between great virtue and great crime!
Oh what a balmless grief if but a dream
Of our disgrace did on thy spirit climb!
And what a joy and what a song supreme
Was heard and felt throughout the realm of rhyme
As we grew up and spirit's swinging beam
Inclined unto our souls, our lyre and lore and theme!"

"When in our youth's intoxicated years,
So full, so drunk, so staggering with wine,
So selfish, insane, suffering and in tears
None, none could help but thy great soul divine,
So near and true with understanding fine.
Ambition torn, rebellious in our power,
Lead on by dream, aghast at life's design,

Trampled and bled by greed's iron-footed hour
We thought the world and all its hosts were swine.
Thine was the grace, redemption, lore and dower
That saved us from our pride, the worst that doth devour."

"'Tis thine Oh Mother of the great and wise
To disentangle, deliver from the curse.
Without thy wisdom and self-sacrifice
We must go on becoming worse and worse.
Perhaps life is predestined to immerse
All spirits great in chaos passion strong
Ere she can find and in us free unpurse
The nobler soul to whom we must belong.
The poet must in travailing learn his verse.
In error, sin, strife, suff'ring, sorrow, wrong,
We learn the nobler life that is the soul of song."

"But this is just thy motherhood's first art,
Beginnings mere, impediments to unlace,
The service first that finds immoral heart
Within thine own and starts them on their race.
When founded firm on being's virtuous base
Thou openest up, astounding with surprise
All expectations hope could ever place—
Such treasures rich no geniuses surmise,
Such beauty, music, wisdom, truth and grace,
Such glories as eclipse the morning skies,
Such virtues as feed life and bid immortals rise!"

"'Tis thou hast taught this high transcendent lore
By which we hear and see and feel and sing.
'Tis thine own life thou givest more and more
That in thine own like sacred fountains spring
And over life divinest influence fling.
Thou teachest soul to hear all music sweet,
To see the rainbow lights that burst and wing,
To feel life's spring and resurrection heat
And translate all in such a beauteous thing
The world will love and in her journey fleet
Bear guarded down the age to some fond safe retreat."

"Thou art the heart, the life and soul of song;
We but reflect as mirrors dark and broke;

The beauty that might blind the earthly throng
We half reveal and often veil and cloak.
We are as lyres that selfish discords choke
And never sing what thou so singest clear.
Could we but sing as thou hast us awoke
We'd shake with life all things within the sphere.
The passionate songs that beauty, music yoke
Is but a dream to that princess and peer
That thou hast brought and wed and we should usher here."

"Thou dost to us most freely freely give
The purest, safest, sweetest of all joys,
To full create the creatures that shall live
Immortal in the strife that all destroys;
Out of the strife, the ruin, curse and noise
To take dead things so formless and profane
And build them up in figure, power and poise
And then breathe in the life that doth sustain,
Lives from itself and all the world upbuoys;
To thus create and send forth with domain
This is the joy of joy, thou Giver of our strain!"

"And thou dost often take us forth with thee
And on some cloud or rocky promontory
Thou didst anoint our inner eyes to see
The glory that is veiled behind the glory.
Old ocean and the morning bursting hoary,
Vast mountain ranges, powers and forms sublime,
Effulgent suns eclipsing every story,
Bright constellations mounting to their prime,
All nature's high magnificence so lory
Thou pointest out and all things seem to climb
To some diviner form than they have worn through time."

"And sometimes down through time and life and man
Thou leadest through the mortal travailing years.
And oft Oh oft when thou dost pause and scan
There is a flood of sorrow, signs and tears;
But in the flood a vision swift appears
Of happy dreams in golden times and states,
Of powers and passions life and love reveres,
Of ideals pure that sense and greed abates

Till hope again mounts to the crested spheres.
This singing throng that round thee congregates
Shares in the vision bright thy sorrow contemplates."

"At times on us there falls a magic spell;
It draws us taut and sets us all on fire,
And flowing up from being's plumbless well
A hungry, boundless, infinite desire,
And then, we hear the full celestial choir.
The noblest songs of singers great and small,
The master skill of every gift and lyre,
And episodes, parts, culminations all
Of that great song that all the ages sire.
Such thoughts, such beauty, inspirations fall
Our startled spirits stunned, we hearken with enthrall."

"And sometimes far, far, far, Oh far above
The world of strife, of sorrow, sense and greed,
Upon the wings of golden life and love
We follow on where Thou dost boldly lead
And find ourselves with life's immortal breed.
In love's supremest fellowship divine,
With nobler souls that meet our largest need,
With singers great that far exceed our line,
With martyred saints of life's most glorious creed
We really live, eat bread and drink the wine
That is the burdened weight of all we sing or sign."

"At some rare times, at nature's jubilee,
At being's promised and prophetic feast
Thou dost unveil thy being pure and free
As morning casts off night, and in the east
Seems nature's high and sacred vested priest.
And so dost thou unveil thy inmost soul
And such a beauty and glory is released,
And such pure passion on our spirits roll
And in us awe and silence so increased
We bow us down and pay our noblest toll,
New wonder, worship, faith, that new our spirits pole."

"Celestial Muse! Nurse of immortal song!
Great hierarchic Spirit famed and bright!
Thou Motherhood who standest in life's throng

A solar Soul amid our mortal night!
Thou giver of all gifts of life and light
Around thee now thine own glad congregated,
There's none on earth, below or on the height
Like unto thee in character and state.
The present, past and future all unite
With binding powers none none can separate.
We pledge soul to thy soul, our fate unto thy fate."

2-8-20.

THE LYRIC

Oh ye singers of the lyric
Sing the songs that make diviner!
Sing the songs so panegyric,
Oh ye singers of the lyric,
That old Life sad and satiric
Marches than immortals finer!
Oh ye singers of the lyric
Sing the songs that make diviner!

For the lyric is the bringer
Of pure palpitating passion
That swift answers to the singer.
For the lyric is the bringer,
A contagious fiery flinger
Of the powers that souls refashion,
For the lyric is the bringer
Of pure palpitating passion.

In the lyric is a measure
That both youth and age entrances
As it feeds the soul a pleasure.
In the lyric is a measure
That the wisest mortals treasure
And to which the human dances.
In the lyric is a measure
That both youth and age entrances.

For the lyric is the answer
To the hungry dreaming spirit.
That is always a romancer.
For the lyric is the answer,
The delighter and entrancer
That compels the heart to hear it.
For the lyric is the answer
To the hungry dreaming spirit.

In the lyric is a beauty
As of nature young and vernal
Or of autumn ripe and fruity.
In the lyric is a beauty
Like a love or joy or duty
From a paradise supernal.
In the lyric is a beauty
As of nature young and vernal.

For the lyric is the waker
Of the blind and blunted senses
When romance seems a forsaker.
For the lyric is the waker,
Finder, feeder and remaker
Spite of flesh and blood that fences.
For the lyric is the waker
Of the blind and blunted senses.

In the lyric is a singing
That doth pierce and probe and quicken
Like a violin when ringing.
In the lyric is a singing
That all healing strength is bringing
When we mortals sigh and sicken.
In the lyric is a singing
That doth pierce and probe and quicken.

For the lyric is the glory
And the prize of song and singer
From the ancient ages hoary.
For the lyric is the glory,
An inspiring strain and story

To redeem the earthly clinger.
For the lyric is the glory
And the prize of song and singer.

In the lyric are united
All the poet's gifts and graces
Though in narrow space bedighted.
In the lyric are united
Passion, music, visions sighted,
And a beauty all embraces.
In the lyric are united
All the poet's gifts and graces.

Oh ye singers of the lyric
Sing to earth the songs immortal
On this life so sore satiric!
Oh ye singers of the lyric
Sing to us the songs so spheric
That we dream the ages courtal!
Oh ye singers of the lyric
Sing to earth the songs immortal!

